Women living in bigamous wedlocks

2656. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether despite all legal provisions to the contrary data on marital status released recently reveals that about 6.4 million Indians below 18 years of age are already married and about 10 million women in the country are living in bigamous wedlocks;

(b) if so, Government's response thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. As per Census of India, 2001, there are 6.4 million Indians under the age of 18 years, who are reported to be already married. At the national level the number of married women exceed the number of married men by 5 million.

(b) and (c) The Government has taken serious note of the report. Though bigamy is an offence punishable under Indian Penal Code, the Government has taken several steps to eliminate child marriages from the country. Such as,

* State Governments have been asked for strict implementation of Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1929.
* State Governments have been asked to take necessary measures to prevent child marriages in their States.
* The proposal for amendment to the Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1929 is presently under consideration of the Government which would help in better implementation of the Act.
* NHRC is also taking steps at its level to address the issue.
* A strong media campaign is being launched by the Department of Women and Child Development especially to target prevention of child marriages in the forthcoming festival season of Akshaya Teej.
* During 2002-03 and 2003-04, the National Commission for Women

launched Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan and in 2004-05 the Commission has asked the State Governments to take steps to curb child marriages. The Commission is also collaborating with State Governments and State Women Commissions for launching the Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan and putting efforts to generate awareness against this social evil.

Foreign lnvestment in higher education

2657. DR. KARAN SINGH:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether present Government are open to allow foreign investment in higher education;

(b) if so, whether Government have had a detailed consultation with all the stake holders before taking any final decision in this regard;

(c) if so, by when a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard;

(d) whether a conference of the State Education Ministers and Secretaries was held in January in Bangalore;

(e) if so, whether this question was also discussed; and

(f) if so, what were the other decisions taken in the conference?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALIASHRAF FATMI): (a) to (f) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Education, including higher education, is already being allowed under the automatic route, without any sectoral cap, since February, 2000 *vide* Order No. 7(4)/2000-IP dated 11th February, 2000 issued by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion.

In order to consult the State Governments on the subject of regulating admissions and fixation of fee for professional education through self financing private institutions as well as entry of foreign universities in India, a conference of State Ministers of Higher and Technical Education was organised at Bangalore on January 10-11,2005. While, there is no specific directive in this regard, however, in the Conference a broad consensus was arrived at on the need for a Central Legislation in this regard. A draft bill has been prepared for vetting by the concerned Departments and